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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2017  
TAGS: FAIR ECON ETRD PGOV ID  
SUBJECT: INDONESIA FAULTS PILOT FOR GARUDA CRASH

Classified By: ECON OFFICER YVONNE GONZALES FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

**¶11. (U) SUMMARY:** Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Commission said pilot error caused the March 7, 2007 Garuda plane crash in Yogyakarta that killed 21. The report, issued on October 22, 2007, also faulted the airline's training practices, the Government of Indonesia's (GOI) supervision of air safety and the airport's poor infrastructure and anemic crisis response. The breadth of safety deficiencies noted in the report suggests that the GOI is getting serious about air safety, according to our contacts. END SUMMARY.

CAUSES OF THE PLANE CRASH

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**¶12. (U)** The crash investigation report pointed to several causes for the crash and inadequate emergency response. During the approach, the plane's flight data recorder revealed that the pilot was singing and that the Ground Proximity Warning System (GPWS) alerts and warnings sounded 15 times. The co-pilot called for the pilot to go around as per company procedures. However, he ignored standard operating procedures that required him to take over from the pilot. The pilot landed the aircraft at double the normal landing speed. Garuda failed to provide investigators with evidence that the company trains its pilots to respond properly to GPWS warnings. The report also faulted Indonesia's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), responsible for regulating air safety, for failing to identify the airline's safety deficiencies. The report pointed out that the airport does not meet international runway standards. Furthermore, the airport's rescue and fire services were ill-equipped and tardy in reaching the crash site, according to the report.

MIXED MESSAGES ON CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

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**¶13. (C)** Commission Chair Tatang Kurniadi publicly stated that safety investigators would not discuss the case with police regarding possible criminal charges against the pilots. He said that under international aviation protocols, crash investigators could only testify at a court hearing. Industry watchers told us that Indonesian legislation does not support Kurniadi's view. Media and family members of the victims demanded that the pilots be held responsible for the passenger deaths. Indonesian National Police (INP) Spokesman Sisno Adiwinoto said the INP may prosecute the pilot and co-pilot and may summon the crash investigators as aviation experts, not as commission officials, for the purposes of their investigation. Australian Ambassador Bill Farmer privately told Minister of Transportation Jusman Syafii Djamal that the Government of Australia (GOA) expected the

GOI to initiate criminal proceedings, according to Australian Embassy Transportation Officer David Ramsey. Five of the 21 killed were Australian, including several of Farmer's staff.

AUSTRALIANS SATISFIED WITH REPORT

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14. (C) In his meeting with Minister Djamal, Farmer also reportedly praised the National Transport Safety Commission for producing a sound report. Ramsey said his government was pleased that the report was released, unlike previous crashes, and that the research and analysis were "reasonably well done." He said GOA officials had worked behind the scenes to encourage a transparent report. They agree the main cause of the plane crash was pilot error, which is partially attributable to poor training by Garuda Airlines.

15. (SBU) The GOA is developing a \$21.6 million transport safety assistance package, which will focus on civil aviation, according to Ramsey. He said they will tailor their program to areas cited as deficient by the report. It will also include a maritime component geared at improving safety for ferries.

16. (C) Ramsey said the GOA civil aviation authority continues to allow Garuda to operate flights to Australia. The GOA is keeping Garuda on a short leash, however, and has been renewing Garuda's foreign operator certificate for only 90 days at a time. Ramsey told us the GOA has so far taken a pragmatic approach to Garuda's certification and noted that a decision to revoke it would have significant diplomatic consequences for their bilateral relations. The GOA will have to take into account Garuda's safety deficiencies as revealed in the crash report when considering certificate renewal, said Ramsey. Garuda is the only Indonesian airline that flies to Australia.

THE GOI AND AIR SAFETY

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17. (U) The Garuda crash was the third serious aviation incident in the first quarter of 2007. The others involved Adam Air planes, a crash with 103 fatalities and a hard landing that sheared off the plane's wings. As a result, the FAA downgraded Indonesian aviation and the European Union blacklisted all 51 Indonesian carriers. Indonesian officials initially responded with finger pointing and blame shifting. In contrast, Garuda crash investigators reviewed safety standards and practices of the airline and airport as well as DGCA's regulatory function. Ramsey suggested that by assigning guilt to multiple actors, the GOI may be taking a more comprehensive approach to aviation safety. He said the report of the investigation of the Adam Air crash of January 1, 2007 will also point to pilot error as the main cause.

HUME